This is a copy of a conversation between ChatGPT & Anonymous.
Report conversation

> On a purely exegetical basis, without theological biases or historical interpretations is there any reason to conclude that the New Testament teaches that Christ would return after the first century?

Understood. We'll approach this purely exegetically—examining **the text itself, in its original Greek and literary context**, without importing theological or historical assumptions. Let's break it down carefully.

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1. Key New Testament statements about Christ's return

The New Testament (NT) contains several passages often cited regarding the timing of Christ's return. Here are some of the primary ones:

a. Statements suggesting imminence

- **Matthew 16:28 (and parallels Mark 9:1, Luke 9:27)**

  > "Truly I tell you, some standing here will not taste death before they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom."

  - Greek: *οὐ μὴ γεύσωνται θανάτου ἕως ἂν ἴδωσιν τὸν υἱὸν τοῦ ἀνθρώπου ἐρχόμενον ἐν τῇ βασιλείᾳ αὐτοῦ*
  - Exegetical note: "ἕως" = "until," which **grammatically strongly indicates that the event occurs before the completion of the action** (in this case, "tasting death"). So the text suggests a **short-**

term or imminent expectation, possibly within the lifetimes of some first-century disciples.

- **Acts 1:6–7**

  "Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?"
  Jesus replied: "It is not for you to know the times or seasons..."

  - The text **explicitly withholds the timing**, but in context, the apostles are expecting a kingdom soon.

- **James 5:7–8**

  "Be patient, therefore, brothers, until the coming of the Lord."

  - The Greek term for "coming" (*παρουσία*) is the same word used for Christ's return in other NT texts. While it doesn't give a date, the exhortation presupposes **imminence**.

- **1 Thessalonians 4:15–17**

  "We who are alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord…"

  - Written in the mid-50s CE, this passage anticipates a **return within the current generation**, suggesting early believers might still be alive.

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b. Statements interpreted as delayed, but ambiguous

Some passages appear to allow for a more open timeframe:

- **2 Peter 3:8–9**

  "With the Lord one day is as a thousand years… The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise…"

- Exegetically, this **uses figurative language** and does not explicitly define chronological delay. It merely reassures that God's plan is certain, not immediate.

- **Matthew 24:36**

  "But about that day and hour no one knows…"

  - While emphasizing human ignorance, it **does not require a centuries-long delay**, only that the exact moment is unknowable.
- **Revelation passages (e.g., Rev 22:12–20)**
  - Warnings such as "Behold, I am coming soon" (*ἐγὼ ἔρχομαι ταχέως*)
  - Greek "ταχέως" literally means "quickly," implying **nearness relative to the author's timeframe**, not necessarily literal 1st-century occurrence.

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2. Exegetical observations about timing

1. **Imminent language is frequent**
   - Words like *ἕως*, *ταχέως*, and phrases such as "some standing here will not taste death" strongly suggest **expectation within the first-century audience**.
2. **No explicit text predicts a long post-first-century delay**
   - Nowhere does the NT clearly state "Christ will return in the distant future," or "after many generations."
3. **Ambiguities exist**
   - Some texts (2 Peter 3, Matthew 24, Revelation) can be read as **figurative or symbolic**, leaving room for interpretation of "soon"

and “delay,” but they **do not explicitly contradict imminent expectation**.

4. **“Until” construction is grammatically decisive**
    - For instance, Matthew 16:28: *οὐ μὴ γεύσωνται θανάτου ἕως ἂν ἴδωσιν…* strongly suggests **the event happens within the lifetimes of those addressed**, a classic example of first-century expectation.

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3. Conclusion (purely from the text)

- **Textually, the NT overwhelmingly anticipates a return within the first-century audience’s lifetime.**
- Passages that might seem to allow a later return are **figurative, indefinite, or focused on human perception of timing**, not explicit chronological statements.
- There is **no passage that clearly teaches a return explicitly after the first century**.

If you want, I can make a **comprehensive table of every NT passage referencing Christ’s return, showing Greek text, translation, and exegetical note about timing**, so we can see systematically how they all point to a first-century expectation.

Do you want me to do that?